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## GEOGRAPHIC SUPPORT PROJECT

GROWTH RATES OF CHINESE AND MALAY POPULATIONS  
IN MALAYSIA



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GROWTH RATES OF CHINESE AND MALAY POPULATIONS IN MALAYSIA

This brief paper undertakes to compare the rates of population growth since 1947 of the Chinese and Malay ethnic groups in Malaysia. A comparison of the number and percentage of Chinese and Malays in each component of Malaysia and in the total population (of the area that is now included in the federation) as of 1947 and 1961 is shown in Table 1. The percentage of Chinese decreased slightly during this period in the Malay States and in Singapore but increased in Sarawak and Sabah; in 1961 the Chinese comprised 42.2 percent of the total population of Malaysia, an increase of about 0.1 percent from 1947. The percentage of Malays increased slightly in the Malay States and in Singapore and decreased slightly in Sarawak; there is no significant Malay population in Sabah. In 1961 the Malays still comprised 39.2 percent of the total Malaysian population, the same as the 1947 figure.

Table 1

Chinese and Malays in Malaysia  
1947 and 1961

	Population in thousands				
	Chinese	Percent of Total	Malays	Percent of Total	Total
1947 Census					
Malay States	1,885	38.4	2,428	49.5	4,908
Singapore	729	77.8	114	12.1	938
Sabah a/	74	22.3	0	0	334
Sarawak	145	26.6	97	17.8	546
Malaysia	<u>2,833</u>	42.1	<u>2,639</u>	39.2	<u>6,726</u>
December 1961 Estimate b/					
Malay States	2,670	36.9	3,616	50.0	7,232
Singapore	1,279	75.2	238	14.0	1,700
Sabah	110	23.2	0	0	475
Sarawak	243	31.2	137	17.6	780
Malaysia	<u>4,302</u>	42.2	<u>3,991</u>	39.2	<u>10,187</u>

a. Figures for Sabah are from 1951 census.

b. Source: Report on the Economic Aspects of Malaysia, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 3 Jul 63. Estimates in this report are based on latest official census or estimate but are updated to December 1961.

Singapore

In Singapore, which has a large Chinese majority (an estimated 1,334,500 Chinese to 249,200 Malays in mid-1963),\* the rate of natural increase (birth rate minus death rate) of the Malays remained at approximately the same level throughout the period from 1958 through 1962, while that of the Chinese dropped significantly. The birth rate of the Singapore Malays actually dropped slightly (from 47.2 per 1,000 to 45.7 per 1,000) during this period, but a substantial drop in the death rate more than compensated for the decline. The Chinese birth rate and death rate both declined during the 5-year period, but the drop in the latter was not sufficient to compensate for the drop in the former. (See Tables 2, 3, and 4.)

Table 2

Singapore

## Live Births and Birth Rates

	Rate per 1,000 Persons				
	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>
Malays					
Live Births	10,005	10,463	10,577	10,990	11,257
Birth Rates <u>a/</u>	47.2	47.0	45.5	45.8	45.7
Chinese					
Live Births	46,189	45,799	44,964	43,060	41,934
Birth Rates <u>a/</u>	39.6	37.7	35.9	33.4	31.8

a. Birth rates are calculated from the number of officially recorded births and the year-end population estimated by the Singapore Chief Statistician.

\* Source: Singapore Chief Statistician. Monthly Digest of Statistics, December, 1963.

Table 3

Singapore

Deaths Recorded and Death Rates

	Rate per 1,000 Persons				
	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>
Malays					
Deaths Recorded	1,931	1,790	1,758	1,800	1,640
Death Rates <u>a/</u>	9.1	8.0	7.6	7.5	6.7
Chinese					
Deaths Recorded	7,613	7,431	7,469	7,333	7,568
Death Rates <u>a/</u>	6.5	6.1	6.0	5.7	5.7

a. Death rates are calculated from the number of officially recorded deaths and the year-end population estimated by the Singapore Chief Statistician.

Table 4

Singapore

Natural Increase and Natural Increase Rates

	Rate per 1,000 Persons				
	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>
Malays					
Natural Increase	8,074	8,673	8,819	9,190	9,617
Rate of Increase	38.1	38.9	37.9	38.3	39.1
Chinese					
Natural Increase	38,576	38,368	37,495	35,727	34,366
Rate of Increase	33.1	31.6	29.9	27.7	26.0

According to the 1957 census, the total population of Singapore had increased 54 percent since 1947, the date of the last previous census. During the intercensal decade the Chinese population increased 49.5 percent and the Malay population increased 73 percent. In 1947, the Chinese comprised 77.8 percent of the population and the Malays 12.1 percent; in 1957, the corresponding figures were 75.4 and 13.6; estimates in December 1961 placed these figures at 75.2 and 14.0. Projected percentages for 1982 are 75.2 and 14.4, according to Population Projections of Singapore, published in 1961 by the Singapore Legislative Assembly. However, these projected figures are based on birth and death rates prevailing at the time of the 1957 census and do not take into consideration changes in these rates. Judging from the change in the rates of natural increase since 1957, the Chinese projection for 1982 probably will prove to be high; that of the Malay population may be slightly low.

#### Malay States

Birth rates, death rates, and rates of natural increase for the Malays and Chinese for the years 1956 through 1960 are shown in Tables 5, 6, and 7. The figures show declining birth and death rates and slowly declining rates of natural increase for both races during the period. The live birth rate of the Malays has remained higher than that of the Chinese even though the infant mortality rate of the Malays has been much higher than that of the Chinese (87 per 1,000 births for the Malays in 1960 as opposed to only 42 for the Chinese).

Table 5

#### Malay States

##### Live Births and Birth Rates

			Rate per 1,000 Persons		
	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
Malays					
Live Births	150,225	150,337	149,206	149,012	149,829
Birth Rates <u>a/</u>	49.3	48.1	46.0	44.5	43.3
Chinese					
Live Births	96,902	101,022	95,190	95,454	95,647
Birth Rates <u>a/</u>	40.9	43.3	39.4	38.5	37.5

a. Birth rates are calculated by the Registrar-General of Births and Deaths from the number of officially recorded births and the estimated midyear population.

Table 6

Malay States

Deaths Recorded and Death Rates

	Rate per 1,000 Persons				
	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>
Malays					
Deaths Recorded	43,212	46,662	43,609	36,714	38,813
Death Rates <u>a/</u>	14.2	14.9	13.5	11.0	11.2
Chinese					
Deaths Recorded	19,584	22,827	20,186	19,250	19,472
Death Rates <u>a/</u>	8.3	9.8	8.4	7.8	7.6

a. Death rates are calculated by the Registrar-General of Births and Deaths from the number of officially recorded deaths and the estimated midyear population.

Table 7

Malay States

Natural Increase and Natural Increase Rates

	Rate per 1,000 Persons				
	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>
Malays					
Natural Increase	107,013	103,675	105,597	112,298	111,016
Rate of Increase	35.1	33.2	32.6	33.6	32.1
Chinese					
Natural Increase	77,318	78,195	75,004	76,204	76,175
Rate of Increase	32.7	33.5	31.1	30.7	29.8

Censuses were taken in the Malay States in 1947 and in 1957. In 1947, the Malays comprised 49.5 percent of the total population, the Chinese 38.4 percent; in 1957, the Malay population accounted for 49.8 percent of the total while the Chinese comprised 37.2 percent. Official government population projections that were calculated in 1957, based on fertility and mortality rates existing at the time of the 1957 census, indicated that by 1962 the Malays would comprise 49.7 percent of the population, the Chinese 37.1 percent; and that by 1972 the Malays would comprise 49.4 percent of the total, the Chinese 37.2 percent. Because fertility and mortality rates are not constant, however, the use of any specific rates over a long period invalidates the projections. Probably a more accurate estimate of the size and composition of the population of the Malay States over the next few years was compiled by a staff member of the American Embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 1961.\* His projections, which took into account changes in fertility and mortality rates, placed the Malay population at 50.1 percent of the total in 1962, the Chinese at 37.2 percent. His projections for 1972 indicate that the Malay population can be expected to increase to 51.6 percent, and the Chinese population to decrease to 35.5 percent.

#### Sarawak and Sabah

Statistics concerning birth rates and death rates are not available for Sarawak and Sabah; thus it is impossible to derive reliable estimates for rates of natural increase of the Chinese and Malay communities in those states. The Chinese population in Sarawak increased from 145,158 in 1947 to 229,154 in 1960, an increase of 57.6 percent. Immigration played a small part in the increase, as records show a net gain of only about 7,800 Chinese by immigration during this period. During the same period, the Malay population increased from about 97,500 to 129,300, an increase of 32.7 percent. Again, immigration was not an important factor in the growth of the Malay community; records show that the net gain of Malays, by immigration during the period amounted to just over 1,000 persons.

In Sabah, where there is no sizable Malay community, the Chinese population increased from 74,374 in 1951 to 104,542 in 1960, an increase of 40.6 percent that was due almost entirely to natural increase as there were only 496 immigrants into Sabah during this period.

\* See State Despatch 389, Kuala Lumpur, 12 June 1961.

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